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Reds Race U.S. Probe To Mars

HOUSTON, Tex., March 9 (UPI)—Russia's Zond-2 cosmic probe, once reported dying in space, is today quite alive and headed toward a spectacular pass within 900 miles of the planet Mars next Aug. 6.

That is the word from Soviet academician Mstislav Keldysh as relayed by Charles S. Sheldon II, a member of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Council.

The U.S. Mariner-4 probe and Zond-2, launched last Nov. 28 and Nov. 30, respectively, are racing toward the mysterious red planet. The American entry, equipped with a television camera to take the first pictures of another planet, will get there first—next July 14.

But the Russian Probe will reach much closer to Mars. Mariner-4 will pass about 5400 miles from the planet on its photographic expedition.

In addition, Sheldon last night quoted Keldysh, a top-ranked Soviet space scientist, as saying Zond-2 weighs about 2000 pounds—four times as much as the delicate U.S. probe.